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2023

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# ORGANIC VEGETABLE PRODUCTION CONFERENCE



January 26 & 27 | Online Everywhere  
February 3 & 4 | In-person in Madison, WI



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# Online Sessions: Growing Under Cover

Every Session at One Link: [tinyurl.com/2023VegConfZoom](https://tinyurl.com/2023VegConfZoom)

Meeting ID: 960 3861 6233

Passcode: 653200

## THURSDAY, 26 JANUARY

## FRIDAY, 27 JANUARY

8:45	<b>Where We Are Create</b> your own pin where farmers can find you throughout the conference	
9:00	<b>Welcome</b>	
9:15	<b>Functional Rotations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sarah Geurkink, MI State University, MI</li> <li>Genesis McKiernan-Allen, Full Hand Farm, IN</li> </ul>	<b>Soil Steaming</b> Andre Cantelmo, Heron Pond Farm, NH
10:00	<b>Break &amp; Visit Hallways</b>	
10:15	<b>Cucumbers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>John Dindia, Lake Hill Farm, MI</li> <li>Christa Alexander, Jericho Settlers Farm, VT</li> </ul>	<b>Tomatoes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cheryl Goering-Kleinfelter, Turner Farm, OH</li> <li>Bethanee Wright, Winterfell Acres, WI</li> </ul>
11:15	<b>Social XLV</b> High vs Cat Tunnels: High-school-style Debate hosted by Sam Oschwald Tilton, UW Madison, WI	<b>Social XLV</b> Fringe Hoopouse Crops hosted by John Hendrickson, CIAS, WI
12:00	<b>End</b>	

## Market Farm Madness - Vegetable Varieties

The NCAA-style Bracket Tournament turns its attention to vegetable varieties this year instead of tools! Over the span of the virtual and in-person events, we'll narrow a field of 64 vegetable varieties down to a champion by voting for our favorites. Who knows, we could have Storage No. 4 and Tendersweet in a head-to-head match-up! Vote on the first round BEFORE the virtual conference: [tinyurl.com/VegVarietyMadness](https://tinyurl.com/VegVarietyMadness)

**John Hendrickson** (coordinator and pun creator) is a Farm Viability Specialist at the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, UW-Madison. See his full bio on page 11 with the Conference Organizing Team.



## 8:45 AM Where We Are

Place your pin and connect on the Padlet map! Just go to the link below and follow the instructions to add your pin, see where others are attending from, and add messages to their posts. A full Padlet how to sheet is included in your attendee packet. [tinyurl.com/2023VegConfMap](https://tinyurl.com/2023VegConfMap)

## 9:00 AM Welcome

### 9:15 AM Functional Rotations in Tunnels

Producing the same crop every year in a high tunnel can lead to issues with diseases, pests, and nutrient imbalances. Learn about the ways that farmers are diversifying and succeeding using functional crop rotations in their high tunnels. Systems for both fixed and moveable tunnels will be highlighted in this session.



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**Sarah Geurkink** works at the University of Kentucky Department of Agricultural Economics doing CSA marketing innovation outreach in partnership with the CSA Innovation Network. She managed the Michigan State University Student Organic Farm from 2017-2022, where she utilized a dynamic rotation in nine tunnels to feed a year-round CSA. Prior to the SOF, Sarah managed the University of Washington Student Farm and Groundswell Community Farm in Zeeland, Michigan.

**Genesis McKiernan-Allen** is co-owner and operator of Full Hand Farm, located in Central Indiana. She farms with her husband Eli Robb, a dedicated crew, and about a half acre of tunnel spaces (both permanent and moveable) for year round market and restaurant sales in Indianapolis.

### 10:15 AM Cucumbers

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos from the field and specific to a variety of scales. Participants will receive a handout detailing the systems of each of the presenters, including everything from germination techniques to crop spacing to equipment to disease and pest control and more.

**John Dindia** and his partner, Bailey Samp, own Lakeview Hill Farm, a certified organic produce farm specializing in hoophouse and greenhouse production, located in Traverse City, Michigan. Lakeview Hill Farm grows a variety of vegetables with a focus on greenhouse heirloom tomatoes, cucumbers, salad greens, and microgreens. Everything is sold to local restaurants, retail stores, farmers market, and an on-site farm store -- all within 12 miles of the farm.

**Christa Alexander** co-owns Jericho Settlers Farm in Jericho, Vermont with her husband, Mark Fasching, where they grow 30 acres of organic vegetables, flowers, and herbs including 2 acres of hoophouses and greenhouses. The farm sells certified organic produce through a year-round CSA, farmstand, and wholesale accounts. Jericho Settlers Farm specializes in year-round vegetable production, consisting primarily of salad greens, tomatoes, cucumbers, and root vegetables.

### 11:15 AM Social XLV

#### High Tunnels vs Cat Tunnels High-School-Style Debate

High tunnels and caterpillar tunnels are different structures, each with their own limitations and strengths. Listen in as four veteran farmers debate the merits of each. Then join the debate and/or the conversation! Arguing in the Caterpillar Tunnel affirmative are: Kat "Cat-tunnel" Becker and Liz "Gothic" Graznak." Arguing in the High Tunnel affirmative are: Paul "Hoop Hoppin" Huber and Mike "Black plastic" Bollinger.

**Kat Becker**, Cattail Organics, WI  
**Liz Graznak**, Happy Hollow Farm, MO  
**Paul Huber**, Troy Farm, WI  
**Mike Bollinger**, River Root Farm, IA

**Sam Oswald Tilton** (facilitator) is a Direct Market Vegetable Specialist for UW-Madison Extension and FairShare CSA Coalition. See his full bio on page 11.

**8:45 AM Where We Are**

Place your pin and connect on the Padlet map! Just go to the link below and follow the instructions to add your pin, see where others are attending from, and add messages to their posts. A full Padlet how to sheet is included in your attendee packet. [tinyurl.com/2023VegConfMap](https://tinyurl.com/2023VegConfMap)

**9:00 AM Welcome**

**9:15 AM Soil Steaming**

Disease and weed seed buildup has led many growers to consider adding soil steaming to their high tunnel management toolbox. Soil steaming has the potential to control these problems while also minimizing the turnover time in between cash crops. Learn about the how's and why's from one of the experts on the topic.

**Andre Cantelmo** co-owns and operates Heron Pond Farm, a four season farm in South Hampton, NH. Andre has farmed for 27 years and he has used soil steaming for 15 of those to manage weeds and disease in his tunnels. Many growers have used his consultation for steaming over the years, including OVPC presenters John Dindia, and Sandy and Paul Arnold.

**10:15 AM Tomatoes**

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos from the field and specific to a variety of scales. Participants will receive a handout detailing the systems of each of the presenters, including everything from germination techniques to crop spacing to equipment to disease and pest control and more.

**Bethanee Wright** of Winterfell Acres has been growing organic vegetables, fruit, flowers and herbs on an intensive 1-acre since 2013. Her main market is through her CSA and to local restaurants. She also manages a young, 2-acre organic orchard.

**Cheryl Goering-Kleinfelter** is the Vegetable Production Manager at Turner Farm in Cincinnati, Ohio. Turner is a Real Organic Project (ROP) certified, non-profit farm growing on 8 acres for a 100 member summer / winter CSA and farmstand sales. Cheryl has a background in culinary arts and focuses on varieties that taste delicious and perform well, while experimenting with new vegetables as a seed trial grower for Row 7 Seed Company.

**11:15 AM Social XLV**

**Fringe Hoophouse Crops**

What do you grow in your hoophouse when you need to switch it up from cucumbers, tomatoes, or salad greens? We will talk about any and all of the more fringe crops from ginger to kale to flowers. Bring your experience and ideas to share.

**John Hendrickson** (facilitator) is a Farm Viability Specialist at the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, UW-Madison. See his full bio on page 11 with the Conference Organizing Team

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## In Person Sessions

### FRIDAY, 3 FEBRUARY

**9:00** Registration & Visit Exhibitors

**10:00** Welcome *Mendota 3 & 4*

**10:15** **Favorite Mistakes** *Mendota 3 & 4*

- Linda Halley, Gwenyn Hill Farm, WI
- Beth Kazmar, Tipi Produce, WI
- Dana Jokela, Sogn Valley Farm, MN

**12:00** Lunch & Visit Exhibitors

**1:00** **Melons** *Mendota 1*

- Sarah Leong, Squashington Farm, WI
- Ben Jackle, Mile Creek Farm, OH
- Richard Vinz, Olden Organics, WI

**Cover Crop Varieties and Why They Matter** *Mendota 2*

- Kat Becker, Cattail Organics, WI
- Lisa Kissing Kucek, USDA, Ag Research Service

**2:30** Break & Visit Exhibitors

**3:00** **Cabbage** *Mendota 1*

- Lincoln Fishman, Sawyer Farm, MA
- Steven Shoemaker, Steadfast Acres, WI
- Ben Jackle, Mile Creek Farm, OH

**Climate Change: Predicting Impacts and Making Plans** *Mendota 2*

- Natalie Hoidal, U of MN Extension, MN
- Jody Lenz, Threshing Table Farm, WI

**5:00** **After Party!** Old Sugar Distillery, 931 E Main St. #8, Madison, WI, 53703

### SATURDAY, 4 FEBRUARY

**8:00** Registration & Visit Exhibitors

**8:30** Welcome *Mendota 3 & 4*

**8:45** **Farmer to Farmer Round Tables** See topics and break out rooms in session description on page 8

**10:30** Break & Visit Exhibitors

**11:00** **Cucumbers** *Mendota 1*

- Chia Fong Yang, Mama and Papa Yang's, MN
- Steve Pincus, Tipi Produce, WI
- Ray Cruz, Hartung Brothers, WI

**Organic Vegetable No-Till** *Mendota 2*

- Rue Genger, UW Madison, WI
- Lincoln Fishman, Sawyer Farm, MA
- Les Macare, Racing Heart Farm, MN

**12:30** Lunch & Visit Exhibitors

**1:30** **Favorite Mistakes Story Slam**

**2:30** **Carrots** *Mendota 1*

- Erik Heimark, Maple Ridge Produce, MN
- Janaki Fisher-Merritt, Food Farm, MN
- Ben Doherty, Open Hands Farm, MN

**Attracting, Compensating, and Retaining Workers** *Mendota 2*

Sarah Janes Ugoretz, FairShare CSA Coalition, WI

**4:00** End

## 10:15 AM Favorite Mistakes (Mendota 3 & 4)

Though mistakes can really knock us down when they happen, learning from them can do so much to lift us up in the long-run. Three experienced farmers will share the stories of their favorite mistakes, how they felt at the time, and how those mistakes lead to positive or negative impacts on their farms. This session will also set the stage for the favorite mistakes story slam on Saturday.

**Linda Halley** has been an organic farm owner and operator since 1989. As a pioneer of the Community Supported Agriculture movement, she developed one of Wisconsin's premier CSAs, Harmony Valley Farm. She left Wisconsin to manage Fairview Gardens, a non-profit, educational farm in California, and later, Gardens of Eagan, a 126-acre greenhouse and produce operation in Minnesota. Currently, Linda is General Manager of Gwenyn Hill Farm in Waukesha, Wisconsin, a diverse, certified organic farm. All that moving around translates into many opportunities for making mistakes.

**Beth Kazmar** runs Tipi Produce in Evansville, WI with husband Steve Pincus. They grow 38 acres of diversified, certified organic vegetables for distribution to natural food coops in Madison, Milwaukee and Janesville, and through their 500-box-per-week CSA. Beth has a Master's degree in plant pathology from UW/Madison and has conducted field research in WI and MD. She has farmed for 23 years, plenty of time to build her mistakes into lessons.

**Dana Jokela** has run Sogn Valley Farm since its inception in 2015, managing all aspects of vegetable production. Before Sogn Valley, Dana studied agriculture at the University of Vermont and got his Master's degree from Iowa State University where he studied cover crops and conservation tillage in vegetable systems. He has also worked on other vegetable operations and has acquired a fair collection of mistakes to work with. He recently took on the role of sales rep for Johnny's Selected Seeds and works with farmers in MN, WI, IA, and IL.

## 1:00 PM Melons (Mendota 1)

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos from the field and specific to a variety of scales. Participants will receive a handout detailing the systems of each of the presenters, including everything from germination techniques to crop spacing to equipment to disease and pest control and more.

**Ben Jackle** is the farmer and co-owner of Mile Creek Farm, a certified organic farm outside of Dayton, OH. He has been farming for 17 years, 15 of those at Mile Creek along with his wife Emily. He raises produce for a 225 share CSA, farmers markets, and wholesale accounts. Both melons and cabbage are featured in Mile Creek Farm's CSA program (though the former generates much more enthusiasm than the later!), at their market stand and through small-scale wholesale distribution to other local CSAs/farm stores.

**Richard Vinz** grew up helping his grandfather produce melons on their 100 acre farm, and is now the 4th generation to manage that land. Richard and his wife Tracy started Olden Organics 18 years ago and have developed an agile approach to growing vegetables as they adapt to both changing climate and customer needs. They use their produce on the process side of their business and also sell through multiple farmers' markets and wholesale accounts.

**Sarah Leong** has been farming since 2013 and started Squashington Farm with her partner Patrick in 2016. Squashington grows on about four acres and offers certified organic vegetables through market-style CSA shares, punch card shares, and the Mt. Horeb farmers market. Eating melons is one of Sarah's favorite summer pastimes.

## 1:00 PM Cover Crop Varieties and Why They Matter (Mendota 2)

Are you ready to give up on winter rye because it is so hard to terminate? Or do you want more biomass from your spring rye stand? And what is the real difference between all those clover options? This session will focus on named cover crop varieties, what they can do, and why they might be worth the extra cost over the VNS (variety not stated) options. Hear from both a farmer using named varieties and a researcher working on developing more of them.



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**Kat Becker** owns Cattail Organics in Athens, WI. She has a three season CSA with a focus on high value wholesale markets with limited pop up and winter farmers markets. In restructuring her farm she has cut her gross sales by 60% and is focusing on fewer enterprises, higher net per acre, a reasonable work week, and “real” farm life balance. Kat is in love with named varieties and is excited to share the love.

**Lisa Kissing Kucek** is a plant breeder with the USDA-ARS in Madison, WI. She manages the Cover Crop Breeding Network, a nationwide effort to release improved cover crop varieties. She connects farmers and researchers to identify needs for cover crop improvement, develop new varieties, and test variety adaptation across the United States. Prior to her PhD, she left a trail of legume cover crop variety trialing from Ecuador to Cuba and Washington State.

### 3:00 PM Cabbage (Mendota 1)

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos from the field and specific to a variety of scales. Participants will receive a handout detailing the systems of each of the presenters, including everything from germination techniques to crop spacing to equipment to disease and pest control and more.

**Lincoln Fishman** and his partner Hilary Costa started Sawyer Farm in 2010 and grow 5 acres of vegetables for their on-farm store and various wholesale accounts. They started farming with horses and used them exclusively through 2021, when they bought a tractor to more fully embrace no-till systems. Now they grow most of their crops, including cabbage, in no-till perennial Dutch white clover. Lincoln is passionate about scalable, reduced-tillage, organic systems.

**Steven Shoemaker** and his wife Elisabeth Minich started Steadfast Acres four years ago. They grow 4.5 acres of diversified vegetables on sandy ground for 120 CSA members, local restaurant accounts, and farmers market. They are a tractor-scale farm when it comes to field prep and transplanting, and a hand-scale farm when it comes to direct seeding and harvesting.

**Ben Jackle** is the farmer and co-owner of Mile Creek Farm, a certified organic farm outside of Dayton, OH. He has been farming for 17 years, 15 of those at Mile Creek along with his wife Emily. He raises produce for a 225 share CSA and also sells through farmers’ markets and wholesale accounts. Both melons and cabbage are featured in Mile Creek Farm’s CSA program (though the former generates much more enthusiasm than the later!), at their farmer’s market stand and through small-scale wholesale distribution to other local CSAs/ farm stores.

### 3:00 PM Climate Change: Predicting Impacts and Making Plans (Mendota 2)

How do we expect the climate of the Upper Midwest to change in the next 30-40 years, and how can we begin to make adaptations on our farms today to prepare for the future? First learn about detailed climate projections for our region and how they may impact vegetable growers. Then hear from a farmer who recently completed a climate resilience plan for her farm through the Risk2Resiliency cohort series led by Laura Lengnick (Cultivating Resilience), the Land Stewardship Project, and University of Minnesota Extension. Climate reliance planning can go well beyond production and some of the plan elements may surprise you.

**Natalie Hoidal** is an Extension Educator at the University of Minnesota, working with vegetable crops and local foods throughout the state. She supports growers with direct technical assistance, writes weekly vegetable updates throughout the growing season via the UMN Extension Fruit & Veg Newsletter, and conducts applied research.

**Jody Lenz** runs Threshing Table Farm with her husband Mike, their three children, and a few amazing employees. They grow diversified vegetables for local markets with a focus on CSA. Jody has spent significant time looking deeply at what to expect from climate change on her farm and has developed a plan for how to prepare for it. Her plan includes some farm-level changes and key community-level work as well.

### 5:00 - 9:00 PM Friday Evening After Party!

New and at popular request, join an actual party!

**Where:** Old Sugar Distillery, 931 E. Main St #8, Madison, WI, 53703

**Parking:** on street

**What to Expect:** Talk shop, chill with fellow farmers, or dance the night away. After a full day of sessions it is time to party - farmer style. You’ll find a cash bar, snacks and food for purchase, music by Sam OT (DJ Greenthumb North), and a fun space to connect with growers near and far, new and old. See the After Party handout in the Atrium for more information on dinner options.



# SATURDAY, 4 FEBRUARY

## 8:45 AM Farmer to Farmer Round Tables

### Session I: 8:45 to 9:35

Atrium - Planning for Climate Resilience  
Mendota 1 - Sourcing Farm Supplies  
Mendota 2 - Farmer Resiliency & Health  
Mendota 3 & 4 - Vegetable Varieties

### Session II: 9:40 to 10:30

Atrium - Reducing Tillage in Organic Vegetable Systems  
Mendota 1 - !Weeds!  
Mendota 2 - Farm Labor  
Mendota 3 & 4 - Vegetable Varieties

### Planning for Climate Resilience *(Atrium Session I only)*

Follow up from yesterday's session on climate change with a more focused discussion on how you might adjust practices on your farm and work with your community to prepare for climate changes. Bring your feelings, questions, and ideas to the group.

**Natalie Hoidal** (facilitator) is an Extension Educator at the University of Minnesota, working with vegetable crops and local foods throughout the state. She supports growers with direct technical assistance, writes weekly vegetable updates throughout the growing season via the UMN Extension Fruit & Veg Newsletter, and conducts applied research.

### Reducing Tillage in Organic Vegetable Systems *(Atrium, Session II only)*

Reducing tillage has a host of benefits for soil health, and low tillage systems can be more resilient to drought, flooding, and extreme weather events. Reducing tillage in organic systems can be tricky, however. This discussion will explore new ideas as well as what is working and what is not when it comes to opportunities for reducing tillage in organic vegetables.

**Rue Genger** (facilitator) is a scientist in the Urban and Regional Food Systems program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Rue's research focuses on reduced tillage methods for organic vegetable production and participatory vegetable breeding and selection for organic production systems.

### Sourcing Farm Supplies *(Mendota 1, Session I only)*

The Midwest Vegetable Grower Network (MVEG) Technical Skills working group is compiling a list of companies selling vegetable farming supplies. The interactive list will include a map of where the suppliers are, their contact information, and what they sell. We will take a tour of the map, share favorite suppliers, and learn some new ones. This resource is just the first project of this group. We will also discuss where you like to find educational resources on farming, what you want to learn about, and how you want to learn it. [tinyurl.com/MVEGFarmSupplies](http://tinyurl.com/MVEGFarmSupplies)

### !Weeds! *(Mendota 1, Session II only)*

"Weeds - they're not really a problem for us" - said few farmers, ever. Come share what is working for you, ask questions, and learn from other growers. Which cultivators are right for your crops and soils? What can you learn about the lifecycle of your problem weeds to help with management? Are your cover crops hurting or helping your weed populations? How can you use the timing, type, and depth of tillage to manage weeds?

**Sam Oschwald Tilton** (facilitator) is a Direct Market Vegetable Specialist for UW-Madison Extension and FairShare CSA Coalition. See full bio on page 11 on the Conference Organizing Team page.

### Farm Resilience and Health *(Mendota 2, Session I only)*

The Midwest Vegetable Grower Network (MVEG) Farmer Resilience and Health working group is compiling resources that support grower health and wellness. Come share resources that support mental and physical health and enhance the quality of life for growers and their families. Also - where do you go for support or to find resources during stressful times?

**Beth Knorr** (facilitator) is the Ohio Program Manager for FairShare CSA Coalition. See her full bio on page 11 with the Conference Organizing Team.

### Farm Labor *(Mendota 2, Session II only)*

The Midwest Vegetable Grower Network (MVEG) Farm Labor working group is looking broadly at the challenges and opportunities for vegetable farm employers and employees. The introduction of the Organic Vegetable Farm Manager Apprenticeship in Wisconsin, the Becoming the Employer of Choice (BTEC) for vegetable farmers, and the Training and Education for Aspiring Managers (TEAMs) are all contributing to improvements, AND there is more to do. Join the discussion to contribute your ideas on what you need to address vegetable farm labor challenges.

**Sarah Janes Ugoretz** (facilitator) is the Apprenticeship Manager for FairShare CSA Coalition. See her full bio on page 11 with the Conference Organizing Team.

### Vegetable Varieties *(Mendota 3 & 4, Session I and II)*

Excellent varieties are central to successful organic vegetable production, which is what makes this discussion so popular every year. Sub-groups may be created based on scale or farm location, depending on who joins the session.

**Julie Dawson** (facilitator) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Horticulture at UW-Madison. She works on organic and participatory variety trials and variety selection for direct-market farms and gardens as well as extension resources for beginning farmers and urban growers. She coordinates the Seed to Kitchen Collaborative, working with plant breeders, farmers and chefs on participatory variety trials for the upper Midwest.

## 11:00 AM Cucumbers (Mendota 1)

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos from the field and specific to a variety of scales. Participants will receive a handout detailing the systems of each of the presenters, including everything from germination techniques to crop spacing to equipment to disease and pest control and more.

**Chia Fong Yang** farms at Mama and Papa Yang's Country Vegetables, an 8 acre farm in Montgomery, MN. He grows a wide variety of vegetables and sells them through an on-site farmstand, 2 farmers markets, and wholesale through the Good Acre.

**Steve Pincus** started growing produce in 1976, with little knowledge and lots of energy. Years later, educated and still learning, he runs Tipi Produce with wife Beth Kazmar and an experienced crew. They grow some 38 acres of Certified Organic mixed vegetables on their Evansville WI farm. Sales are balanced between CSA and wholesale, mainly to Natural Food Coops in Madison, Milwaukee and Janesville.

**Ray Cruz** is the Organic Operations Manager and Crop Distribution Manager for Hartung Brothers, Inc. Hartung Brothers has been growing cucumbers since 1997 and has recently begun producing certified organic cucumbers in Wisconsin. Pickling cucumber production has been their main focus so far, with fresh-market cucumber production starting soon. Ray has managed the Organic Operations at Hartung Brothers since early 2020.

## 11:00 AM Organic Vegetable No-Till (Mendota 2)

Have you wondered what would happen if you were to plant directly into a standing clover cover crop? Are you curious about landscape fabric and silage plastic and how they might help you reduce tillage and control weeds? This session will focus on two unique organic no-till systems in use by the farmer speakers and will include results from an on-farm trial looking at cover crop termination techniques for organic no-till.

**Lincoln Fishman** and his partner Hilary Costa moved to Sawyer Farm in Worthington, MA in 2010. Lincoln started working with undersown clover over a decade ago and now plants some crops directly into standing clover. He used this system both to reduce tillage and address his long-term sustainability goals. He approaches his work with an open mind about plant competition, a willingness to experiment, and readiness to make changes based on the priorities for his farm.

**Les Macare** and their partner Els Dobrick started farming together in 2014 on rented land with shared equipment. When they bought their farm in 2017, they endeavored to invest in equipment and infrastructure that served their personal values and intensive farming style. No-till with minimal mechanization emerged as a way to enjoy farming, connect with their land, and increase productivity. They use hand tools and a BCS walk-behind tractor on their 2 acre farm in Western Wisconsin.

**Rue Genger** is a scientist in the Urban and Regional Food Systems program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Rue's research focuses on reduced tillage methods for organic vegetable production and participatory vegetable breeding and selection for organic production systems.

## 1:30 PM Favorite Mistakes Story Slam (Mendota 3 & 4)

As a follow-up to the Favorite Mistakes general session on Friday, we will open the mic for as many mistakes as we can fit in an hour! Bring your funny, sad, uplifting, or tragic story to this supportive crowd of vegetable farmers who will cheer you on and thank you for sharing your mistakes so that others can learn!

**Claire Strader** (facilitator) is the Organic Vegetable Educator for UW-Madison Extension in Dane County and FairShare CSA Coalition. See her full bio on with the Conference Organizing Team page 11.



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**2:30 PM Carrots (Mendota 1)**

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos from the field and specific to a variety of scales. Participants will receive a handout detailing the systems of each of the presenters, including everything from germination techniques to crop spacing to equipment to disease and pest control and more.

**Janaki Fisher-Merritt** co-owns The Food Farm, a certified organic farm located 30 minutes south of Duluth, MN. The Food Farm has been feeding the Duluth area since 1975, when Janaki's parents started the farm. Their innovative root cellar is famous, and stores carrots and other roots well through the winter. In addition to growing food, The Food Farm is focused on building community by hosting events such as the annual Free Range Film Festival.

**Ben Doherty** is co-owner of Open Hands Farm, a certified organic 17-acre vegetable farm in Northfield, MN, selling CSA shares and wholesale pallets, with a specialty in wholesale winter roots. Tales of Ben and Erin's custom root storage cooler made their way to conference organizers, and we are glad they will share their secrets to success!

**Erik Heimark** has owned and operated Maple Ridge Produce, a 5-acre produce farm, for the last 8 years with his husband Jay Rigdon. He is the Specialty Crops Farm Business Management (FBM) Instructor at Central Lakes College and used to teach High School Agriculture. Before teaching he managed Gilby's Orchard and worked as a naturalist for a local nature center.

**2:30 PM Attracting, Compensating, and Retaining Workers (Mendota 2)**

Rare is the organic vegetable farm that can run on the owner's labor alone. This session will present the results of a 2022 study of organic vegetable farm employees in the U.S. Data was gathered from nearly 200 employees through an online survey and several focus group discussions. The results include what attracts employees to a farm, what they expect to be paid, and what keeps them coming back. This session will include time to discuss some of the more controversial results.

**Sarah Janes Ugoretz** (facilitator) is the Apprenticeship Manager for FairShare CSA Coalition. See her full bio on page 11 with the Conference Organizing Team.



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## CONFERENCE ORGANIZING TEAM

**Claire Strader** is the Organic Vegetable Educator for UW-Madison Extension in Dane County and the FairShare CSA Coalition. In this shared position, Claire works with organic vegetable farmers serving fresh markets. Her key projects include on-farm research on reducing tillage, farm labor, the Midwest Vegetable Growers Network (MVEG), and this conference.

**Dan Fillius** is the statewide field specialist for commercial vegetables and specialty crops with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Before joining Extension, Dan grew organic vegetables for 13 years including stints managing the Michigan State University Student Organic Farm and 140 acres of vegetables at Featherstone Farm.

**Sarah Janes Ugoretz** is the Apprenticeship Manager for FairShare CSA Coalition. She oversees the apprenticeship program, of which FairShare is the industry sponsor, and teaches both the Becoming the Employer of Choice (BTEC) for vegetable farmers series and the Training and Education for Aspiring Managers (TEAMs) series. In addition to her work with FairShare, Sarah is a PhD candidate focusing on the labor experience with the organic vegetable industry.

**Beth Knorr** is the Ohio Program Manager for FairShare CSA Coalition. She has a background in CSA farming, farmers' market management and data collection, nutrition incentives, and sustainable agriculture policy advocacy. She has been an active member of Ohio's sustainable agriculture community since 1998, is a past chair of the USDA Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee. Beth currently lives in Akron, OH growing as large of a garden as her city lot will allow.

**Sam Oswald Tilton** is a Direct Market Vegetable Specialist for UW-Madison Extension and FairShare CSA Coalition. He has a background in vegetable farming and horticultural education. He studied horticulture at Michigan State University with a focus on precision weeding tools. Sam has designed weeding machines for KULT-Kress and visited farms throughout Europe and the U.S. He organizes the Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day and lives in Sheboygan.

**John Hendrickson** coordinates research and outreach programs in organic and sustainable specialty crop production, marketing, and profitability at the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, UW-Madison. His work focuses on the economics of small-scale vegetable farming and includes the Veggie Compass program—a spreadsheet tool to help growers measure profitability by crop and market. For 16 years, John operated his own organic vegetable farm.



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